

**MINUTES  
of the  
FIRST MEETING IN 2007  
of the  
WELFARE REFORM OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**June 12, 2007**

The 2007 organizational meeting of the Welfare Reform Oversight Committee was called to order by Senator Linda M. Lopez, chair, on Tuesday, June 12, 2007 at 10:20 a.m. at the State Capitol. There were no handouts.

**Present**

Sen. Linda M. Lopez, Chair  
Rep. Luciano "Lucky" Varela, Vice Chair  
Sen. Sue Wilson Beffort  
Rep. Antonio Lujan  
Sen. Gerald Ortiz y Pino  
Rep. Nick L. Salazar  
Rep. Jim R. Trujillo  
Rep. Gloria C. Vaughn

**Absent**

Sen. Dianna J. Duran  
Sen. Clinton D. Harden, Jr.  
Sen. John Pinto  
Rep. Shirley A. Tyler

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Miguel P. Garcia

Sen. Ben D. Altamirano  
Rep. Candy Spence Ezzell  
Rep. Daniel R. Foley  
Rep. Larry A. Larrañaga  
Rep. Steven P. Neville  
Sen. John C. Ryan  
Rep. Edward C. Sandoval

**Staff**

Jennie Lusk  
Carrie McGovern

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

**Tuesday, June 12**

**Work Plan**

The chair welcomed members back for another interim session in which, she hopes, the committee could help families on the financial brink. She said that the role of the Welfare Reform Oversight Committee is critical in strengthening New Mexico's families. She requested comments from committee members as to changes to the work plan, which was presented in draft form.

Legislators emphasized the needs for results and measurable means of evaluating whether programs are meeting the needs of families and the state. They also discussed the need to evaluate the success or lack of success of welfare reform in general. Representative Lujan mentioned the book, "Assets and the Poor", and suggested that the committee ask for an evaluation of individual development account programs, since such programs help poor families build assets and this is the best way to guarantee a move out of poverty. Concerns were expressed about the fact that graduation rates indicate that fewer than 50 percent of minority children in New Mexico will graduate from high school, and members expressed interest in hearing about graduation statistics and plans for improving graduation rates. Other topics suggested for addition to the work plan were: teen pregnancy programs; agricultural education and training programs to encourage poor people to increase individual farming; the importance of health care costs in moving people out of poverty; the importance of substance abuse programs in helping people to get off and stay off drugs so that they can enter the workforce; domestic violence and rape prevention; and immigration. Representative Varela encouraged a closer relationship with the Legislative Finance Committee, so that the Legislative Finance Committee is aware of the Welfare Reform Oversight Committee's priorities. The chair was notified of special concerns about funding for adult basic education. The work plan will be modified to reflect these priority changes.

### **Domestic Violence Programs and Funding**

Dorian Dodson, secretary of children, youth and families, appeared before the committee to report that "not a dime" of the temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) funds allocated for domestic violence programs will revert to the federal government, despite any information to the contrary that committee members may have heard. At one point, it appeared that \$1.3 million of the \$2 million in TANF dollars that transferred from the Human Services Department (HSD) to the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) could not be obligated during the current fiscal year because of problems in issuing requests for proposals (RFPs).

The secretary explained that HSD had channeled TANF dollars to the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence when HSD was in charge of domestic violence funds. However, when CYFD took over TANF domestic violence programs, a decision was made not to operate through the coalition but instead to issue money directly to providers through a competitive process. Some providers continued to apply through the coalition, but the coalition was not responsive to the RFPs, the secretary said, and some individual responses were also not responsive.

Senator Lopez asked the secretary a number of questions. Among them, she asked whether programs that underspent their budgets will be receiving new money; whether the administration was committed to its assurances that existing services would not be disrupted with a change of administration from HSD to CYFD; and what steps legislators could take to ensure that domestic violence dollars are well-spent. Secretary Dodson said that she asks programs that consistently underspend their budgets whether they actually need their current

level of appropriation, since they jeopardize funding if they do not spend the money allocated to them. Because of the lateness of issuing the RFPs, some groups have had a difficult time obligating the money and spending it by June 30. In order to answer the questions regarding disruption and effectiveness, the secretary offered to return to the committee with a plan of how to work together with all domestic violence programs.

Representative Begaye, who left the Water and Natural Resources Committee meeting in order to attend the Welfare Reform Oversight Committee's domestic violence discussion because of concerns over domestic violence funding, said he wants to see domestic violence programs located in every county. He said that both the members of the Native American and New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence have had concerns with the shift in the coalition and with CYFD funding and noted that problems began when administration of the domestic violence programs shifted from HSD to CYFD. He mentioned the Shiprock shelter and a shift in emphasis there from a family-based model to almost a behavioral health model and a change in service protocols to "unit costs" rationales for expending state dollars. He noted that there is only one shelter operated by the Native American Domestic Violence Coalition, the shelter is at full capacity and new Native American domestic violence programs have not been initiated despite recurring domestic violence issues in Shiprock and Gallup. He suggested that infighting among the domestic violence czar and the head of the domestic violence coalition be minimized so that people who need services are not penalized for political strife.

Secretary Dodson agreed to forward information to staff about domestic violence budgets. She also invited committee members to take part in roundtable discussions on domestic violence throughout the state. David Lucero, Legislative Finance Committee analyst for domestic violence programs, was asked to track and report performance measure changes between RFPs for domestic violence providers under both HSD and CYFD.

On a question from Senator Ortiz y Pino, Secretary Dodson said that she was comfortable with saying that all programs that applied for funding will continue to get it, that local services are not affected and that her department is providing technical assistance to groups whose RFP responses were not adequate. There is no documentation of persons being turned away from shelters over issues of funding. In some cases, there is not enough room in current shelters, but she does not consider this a funding issue.

Senator Lopez added that the amount of money in dispute — some \$2 million — may seem small, but it is crucial for those who need services. She asked that the secretary ensure that communications improve among the department and providers.

Senator Beffort reported that she had discussed the \$250,000 appropriation from the general fund for domestic violence with the secretary. She said the "bottom line" is that New Mexico continues to have one of the worst domestic violence situations in the whole country, that domestic violence always escalates and that the committee continues to need information about services. She has asked that Dr. Sue Ludwig be included on a committee agenda to talk about a program with male offenders that has shown success in reducing recidivism. Finally, she

said, most domestic violence victims are TANF-eligible and internal disputes cannot be allowed to damage delivery of any services. She would like to see any remaining problems mended by this summer.

The committee decided to make domestic violence, and funding and programs associated with delivery of domestic violence programs in New Mexico, a major focus for its September meeting. Representative Trujillo asked whether rape crisis centers can be included in requests for domestic violence funds, and the secretary responded that a rape crisis center is already getting domestic violence funds. The new secretary of health will be asked to appear and state his goals in the area of domestic violence.

#### **Public Comment**

Sandra Corriveau requested that the committee change its plans to visit Las Cruces from July to August and the committee agreed.

#### **Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 12:02 p.m.